

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR EDUCATION**



FY 2024 Budget Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
Paul Kihn, Deputy Mayor for Education

Before the
Committee of the Whole, The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia

April 7, 2023

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson, members of the Committee of the Whole, staff, and members of the public. My name is Paul Kihn, and I am honored to serve as the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) for the District of Columbia. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's Budget Oversight Hearing.

The DME is honored to help shepherd Mayor Bowser's vision for a public education system that successfully and equitably meets the needs of Washington, D.C.'s children, youth, and families. We are justly proud of the progress we have made toward our vision for public education in the District – one in which all young people thrive in high-quality schools surrounded by caring, supportive adults and graduate prepared for success in life. This progress is evidenced by the record enrollment in the District's public schools this year and the academic progress of our students in reading, math, and graduation over the past decade. We are strong and getting stronger, although we know we have much more work to do.

As we move into Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 24), we face severe financial headwinds due to the ramp down of federal recovery funding and a more constrained local budget. As a result, we have had to make difficult decisions as we reduced our expenses by approximately \$373 million across our government to achieve a balanced budget. As we take a hard look at how and where we are spending our resources, to ensure that we are being as effective, targeted, and impactful as possible, we are prioritizing public education and our children, youth, and families; doubling down on investments that have driven our progress; and directing resources toward residents with the greatest needs.

In this challenging climate, we are absolutely prioritizing education through investments in the following areas.

1) We Are Prioritizing School Funding

Mayor Bowser's FY 24 budget prioritizes education as a foundational pillar of our District's comeback through another year of historic investment. For a second year in a row, we have increased the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) by over 5%, in recognition of rising costs facing schools. We continue to lead the country with one of the highest per pupil spending rates and a foundation level that is now over \$13,000 per student. As we ramp down federal funding, we are continuing our investment in the Mayor's Recovery Fund, adding \$20 million to DC Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter schools, to create a glidepath to sustainable, steady funding and avoid a fiscal cliff. The DCPS budget model, which advances greater equity in the allocation of resources toward students with greater needs (those considered at risk for purposes of funding, special education students, and English Language Learners), is adding an additional \$9.6 million to final school budgets as part of the budget development process, for a total of over \$845 million going to DCPS schools, an increase over FY 23.

We also know that early childhood education is critical for youth development and for working families, which is why DC continues to be a national leader in offering free PK3 and PK4. In the proposed budget, we are building on our first-in-the-nation child care program by expanding eligibility for child care subsidies to 300% of the federal poverty line, increasing access for an estimated 2,200 more DC children and families.

2) We Are Investing in Educators

The Mayor's FY 24 budget is a teacher's budget. The largest targeted investment in education is for raises for our educators, in recognition of their critical service and professional value. The proposed budget gives teachers across all 70 Local Education Agencies (LEAs) 12.5% raises and bonus backpay, putting resources directly in the pockets of the educators who make our education system thrive. We are proud to have negotiated a historic contract with the Washington Teachers' Union that raises teacher salaries by 12.5%. To provide equitable funding for teachers across our public school system, the proposed budget includes a 12.5% raise for teachers at public charter schools, to reward teachers for their work and allow charter schools to remain competitive in hiring. The budget also includes a retroactive payment bonus for charter school teachers that equates to approximately \$5,000 per teacher, in recognition of the hard work of our educators during the pandemic. We are at the same time recognizing the contributions of our early childhood educators by fully funding the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund, for a total of \$70 million.

Looking toward the future workforce, the Mayor's FY 24 budget is investing in teacher apprenticeships, so that more DC students will become future DC teachers and so we can build a more diverse educator workforce. While we continue to pilot new approaches to scheduling and teacher roles, we believe nationally competitive compensation and local talent pipeline development are the recruitment and retention strategies that are the most impactful and important to prioritize.

3) We Are Investing in Learning Environments

The Mayor's FY 24 budget deepens our investments in inviting and safe learning environments. The budget includes over \$400 million in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for DCPS school modernizations and renovations. We have heard from school communities and Council about the need for increased maintenance support; to that end, the proposed budget includes \$90 million over six years for DCPS to preserve and maintain school facilities through small capital investments in HVAC, life safety needs, athletic field repairs and upgrades, and ADA compliance. The budget also includes a 3.1% increase in facilities funding for public charter schools, to ensure healthy and well-maintained facilities across our system.

4) We Are Investing in Evidence-Based Interventions and a Reimagined High School System

The Mayor's FY 24 budget maintains critical investments in evidence-based strategies to close opportunity gaps. This includes \$8 million to sustain our multi-year investment in high-impact tutoring for students with the greatest needs. High-impact tutoring, one of our core recovery strategies, is currently serving 5,000 students and will grow to serve 7,000 additional students in FY 24. The high-impact tutoring investment adds staff to our schools, which in turn supports student well-being through positive relationships between students and adults. We are also leveraging over \$1 million of our federal funding to double the number of educators receiving structured literacy training (through LETRS) to 530 by the end of FY 24 and to serve 1,000 educators through Science of Reading training through the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), with stipends for the participants.

The proposed budget continues our investment in a reimagined education system that better prepares students for life after high school. This includes our investments in the Advanced Technical Center, dual enrollment, and internships, all of which help students explore their interests and gain postsecondary experience and credit, creating momentum toward college and career success. We are also piloting a virtual course hub so students can access synchronous, engaging, and advanced course opportunities without having to leave their schools.

To ensure that our education system is investing in evidence-based interventions, we are proud to launch an education to employment data system. Joining 20+ states across the nation, this system will build on the data work underway at OSSE and other agencies, connect our K-12, postsecondary, and workforce data, and allow policymakers, including the DC Council, and the public to understand the impact of education and training interventions on residents' postsecondary and workforce outcomes. This important data system will support the work of the Research Practice Partnership and guide our investments for years to come. The education to employment data system will allow all of us to make more data-informed policy decisions.

5) We Are Making a Down Payment on Afterschool and Youth Development

As part of our reimagined system, the Mayor's FY 24 budget makes a significant down payment on out of school time (OST) in DC, to support youth development and well-being. On top of the \$17 million investment in OST programs, the proposed budget includes \$5 million for My Afterschool DC. We know that many families struggle to identify high-quality, accessible afterschool options. My Afterschool DC addresses this problem. My Afterschool DC will lay the foundation for our long-term vision that every elementary school student and family has a free afterschool option at their school as well as citywide programs to choose from. The system will be a one-stop shop for OST programs offered by a range of agencies, including the Office of Out of School Time Grants and Youth Outcomes (OST Office), the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and LEAs, and will thereby increase ease of access for families. In addition to developing a user-friendly portal, similar to My School DC, the majority of the funding for My Afterschool DC (\$3.1 million) will go directly to free afterschool programming in priority elementary schools. The grants will be informed by the recently completed OST needs assessment and will pilot new approaches to serving students with currently limited OST access. In the long term, this investment in My Afterschool DC will ensure equitable access to high-quality out of school time programming across the District.

Building further on the learnings from the OST needs assessment, we seek to expand OST seats for students with the greatest needs and access barriers. That is why we are earmarking \$2.5 million in OST funding for students with disabilities and special education needs and adding \$3.4 million to DPR to support the Inclusive Summer Plus recreation activities and accelerated learning opportunities for the students most affected by the pandemic, including additional summer camp slots for children and youth with disabilities. Our investments also include \$6.8 million for OSSE's Special Education Enhancement Fund to pay for dedicated childcare slots for infants and toddlers with disabilities and OST slots for our youngest children with disabilities.

6) We Are Supporting Youth Safety and Well-Being

We continue to experience the devastating consequences of violence on youth and our communities. Consequently, we are making ongoing investments in youth well-being and safety as part of the District's holistic approach to gun violence prevention and reduction. This includes our ongoing commitment to the school-based behavioral health program and restorative practices, and DC SchoolConnect, our micro-transit initiative that supports rides to and from school for students in Wards 7 and 8. The budget sustains our investment of \$9 million for the Safe Passage, Safe Blocks (Safe Blocks) program, which provides grants to community-based organizations to staff routes to school with adults who develop relationships with students and help prevent and de-escalate conflicts. This funding level reflects additional resources to fully fund community-based organizations providing services across our eight priority areas. To increase the efficacy of this program, the proposed budget moves Safe Blocks to the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice (DMPSJ) so violence prevention and interruption programs can be situated together, with appropriate staff expertise, and to increase communication and coordination among similar public safety programs, often with overlapping grantees. DME will continue to play a key liaison role between schools and public safety partners, with a particular focus on ensuring our Safe Blocks grantees are well integrated into school communities.

To provide support to schools to protect their students and communities, the Mayor's FY 24 budget repeals the phase-out of the School Resource Officer (SRO) program; we urge the Council to support that policy decision. The SRO program ensures that the officers who respond to the thousands of calls from schools to the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) are appropriately trained in youth engagement and de-escalation and have previously developed relationships with students and school communities.

Finally, the DME worked collaboratively with DMPSJ, the Department of Corrections (DOC), and OSSE to address the unique needs of special education students at the DC jail. As a result, the proposed budget includes a critical investment of \$4 million to fund a contract with an educational provider with the expertise to serve special education students who are under the custody of DOC and those undergoing competency evaluation at St. Elizabeth's.

7) We Are Leading Citywide Planning and Coordination

In FY 24, the DME will continue foundational studies that will provide important information to guide decision-making across our system. This includes the Student Assignment and Boundary Study and the Master Facilities Plan, which will continue in FY 24 with the support of rollover funding from FY 23. DME is also continuing investment in the staffing necessary for our office to lead the Every Day Counts! attendance task force and to engage school and community members, especially those with limited access to influence, in the Boundary Study and other DME priority initiatives.

8) We Are Advancing an Inclusive Jobs Recovery

Finally, the Mayor's FY 24 budget continues to drive toward an inclusive jobs recovery. This

includes DC Futures, DC's free college program, and our key youth employment programs, including the Marion S. Barry Summer Youth Employment Program, school year internships (through the Department of Employment Services), and the advanced internship program (through OSSE). The education to employment data system discussed previously will help us understand which education and workforce programs are most effective in supporting residents in securing family-sustaining jobs, and will also support employers seeking to develop a local talent pipeline.

In summary, Mayor Bowser's FY 24 Fair Shot Budget prioritizes our public education system through targeted investments in evidence-based and innovative strategies and students with the greatest needs. These investments represent a direct commitment to the next generation of Washingtonians and a down payment on our future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to your questions.